

**ND Interagency Coordinating Council (IDEA Part C) – ND State IDEA Part B
Joint Advisory Committee Meeting
June 5, 2008
Bismarck, ND**

Laura Larson presided for the Joint Advisory Committee meeting and called the meeting to order at 8:35 p.m. CDT.

Present: Laura Larson, Roxane Romanick, Deb Balsdon, Rita Weisz, Shawnda Ereth, Tammy Gallup-Millner, Dana Lone Bear, Kathy Barchenger, Jim Carter, Holly Major, Brenda Patzner, Steven Olson, Allison Dressen, Linda Rorman, Linda Jagielo, Garry Freier, Arlene de la Paz, Edna Keller, Jill Staudinger, Scott Hoeper, Judy Freund, Colleen Schneider, Desiree Schneider, Colette Perkins, Wendy Thomas, Cathy Lee.

Family Story: Laura Larson welcomed the members of the joint committee and asked Bob Rutten from ND DPI to introduce the guests who agreed to share their family story.

Colleen Schneider and her daughter, Desiree, gave a moving presentation about their experiences related to having a disability and receiving special education services. Their shared message is “*never give up.*” Desiree told her mother during her Junior year of high school about her personal dream. She experienced many frustrations resulting from her disability, however, she never gave up on her dream. Desiree was inspired by listening to speeches given by students during her older sister’s high school graduation. During Desiree’s Senior year at Bismarck High School (BHS) she applied for scholarships. She wrote an essay for one scholarship application and gave the essay to her school principal and school counselor. After meeting with Desiree, her counselor encouraged her to apply to a committee that would decide who would be chosen to present speeches at the BHS graduation. Desiree was one of six students selected from her class of over 400 students to speak at this large event at the Bismarck Civic Center on May 25th. A friend filmed Desiree’s graduation speech and the Joint Committee watched the DVD of her remarks. In her speech Desiree gave great credit to her personal hero, her mother, Colleen Schneider. She emphasized that teachers need to listen closely to their students, and they should never underestimate the ability of students who have disabilities. She made a special point that “*winners never quit and quitters never win.*” After her speech at the graduation ceremony Desiree said that she felt successful “for the first time in my life.” Colleen told the committee that Desiree’s special education speech-language teacher read much of Desiree’s speech at a BHS all-faculty meeting after the graduation ceremony. The Assistant Principal at BHS reminded teachers about the significant impact they have on students’ lives.

March minutes review: Laura Larson asked the joint committee members to review the minutes. There were no member comments.

The committee members then reviewed the agenda for today’s meeting.

Member Updates and Issues: Tammy Gallup-Millner reported that the ND Center for Persons with Disabilities received an integrated services grant.

Early Childhood Outcomes: Deb Balsdon and Bob Rutten provided updates on federal IDEA Part B & Part C Early Childhood Outcomes. Measurements are intended to illustrate what difference services are making for children. Deb described Part C entrance and exit measures to determine the progress of children during early intervention services. Communication and behavior development trends are reviewed. A tool (Child Program, Assessment, and Review) to measure progress over time was developed at the University of Portland. The ND Department of Human Services IDEA Part C has been using this tool for two years to collect data. Deb reported that ND is the leading state in identifying children under age one for early intervention services. Training will occur in June to be sure that everyone in the state is using the tool in the same way. Deb reported that the tool has very discrete measures of progress.

Bob explained the purpose of recent training that was conducted by the ND Department of Public Instruction office of special education on May 8-9, 2008 that focused on “*Measuring Early Childhood Outcomes*.” Approximately 170 people participated in this training. Nancy Skorheim from the ND DPI Office of Special Education worked closely with North Dakota early childhood educators, administrators, and professors to plan and present information at this conference. Dr. Mary McLean from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee addressed issues of validity in assessing the abilities of children and making the most of the assessment process. Seven approved “anchor tools” were presented and made available for participants to explore. The ND DPI has made funding available to assist districts in obtaining these anchor tools. Roxane Romanick asked if the Part B anchor tools can be used to determine eligibility for services, or do they need to rely on the assessment tool that was selected by Part C. Effective July 1, 2008, ND school districts will be required to use the approved anchor tools to measure and report early childhood outcome measures.

Head Start Reauthorization:

Deb introduced Linda Rorman, the ND State Head Start Collaboration Office coordinator. Linda shared information regarding the recent Head Start reauthorization. On Dec. 12, 2007, President Bush signed P.L. 110-134 authorizing Head Start through 2012. There are operating Head Start programs in all ND counties and reservations. Linda noted that “these programs are under-funded, and some have no early Head Start programs.” Linda shared three handouts with the committee members.

The first was a *Crosswalk of Requirements for Head Start Grantees, HSSCO and Training and Technical Assistance*. She noted that no additional federal funds were given to conduct these required activities. There is a move to make technical assistance more state driven. There is a change in the eligibility, however, this doesn’t mean that more children can be served. Linda reported that federal funding for Head Start is down about 12% since 2005. Every program has been required to restrict their services.

Another of Linda’s handouts focused on Head Start collaboration. The reauthorized Head Start Act requires state governors to establish or designate State Advisory Councils on Early Childhood Education and Care for Children, birth to school entry. Periodic statewide assessments of services (0-3) will be a required council function. This will include recommendations for professional development, and an analysis of the capacity of higher

education in the state to support the preparation of early childhood educators. There are anticipated stricter requirements for Head Start teacher qualifications. Deb Balsdon asked if Linda was aware of how other states with small populations are addressing the advisory council requirements. She noted that in our state it could be some of the very same people who are already meeting for other purposes. One of the requirements for the State Collaboration Office is to facilitate collaboration among Head Start/Early Head Start agencies and entities that carry out activities designed to benefit low-income children from birth to school entry, and their families. The state office is working to align the curriculum and assessment requirements for Head Start with the state's new *Early Learning Guidelines* and the state Kindergarten standards. A 5-year strategic plan will be required. Linda noted that the needs of children with disabilities will need to be addressed.

Morning Break

Autism Spectrum Disorder Related Issues:

Roxane Romanick introduced Wendy Thomas, the ND Center for Persons with Disabilities (NDCPD) Community Services Coordinator. Wendy shared information about the NDCPD Autism Initiative. This March the ND Autism Symposium took place. Three hundred persons attended this forum in Minot. Wendy discussed the prevalence of autism in ND, issues related to providing services in our rural and remote state, gaps in services, and professional training. Federal funding for the Great Plains Autism Spectrum Disorders Treatment Program will begin in September.

During the March symposium there were opportunities for participants to identify needs in the state. There has been a significant increase in the number of children identified with autism in the past five years. Connecticut and Utah recently published a state plan for autism; that is considered to be something needed in our state. A researcher estimated that costs for formal and informal services for a child with autism over a lifetime is 3.2 million dollars. Wendy noted that most students with autism are served in the 8 largest special education units in the state, and that most teachers seem well-trained. However, there's a need for well-trained behavior specialists, and also for appropriately trained persons in more rural areas.

Parents at the symposium reported that services for their children are primarily paid for by their local public schools. Some parents reported using their personal funds to pay for certain services. Wendy talked about the need to use evidenced-based practices, but indicated that she wants to be open to parents' concerns. The NDCPD is not promoting one method for use with children who have autism. Deb Balsdon said that the National Research Council reports that "there is no one way" to work with children who have autism. Early intervention is considered critical for later success. Parents reported to Wendy that their children are doing well in school where there is often more structure, but they have greater difficulties at home and in the community where there is less structure. More screening for autism in 18 and 24 month-old children is emerging. Eye gaze is also being studied. Sixty-two percent of the parent participants at the March symposium reported that public schools are the primary treatment providers for their children. Wendy said the issue isn't so much getting children diagnosed, but doing what comes after the diagnosis.

The goals and the various funding streams for the Great Plains Autism Spectrum Disorders Treatment Program were identified. Current work of the program is supported through NDCPD's core grant. Continuation funding is being explored at this time. Deb Balsdon reported that the requirement for insurance providers to cover autism services is being explored across states. Deb also shared information about a national conference in Ohio last fall that a team from North Dakota attended. The ND Department of Human Services and the ND Department of Public Instruction jointly sponsored the team that participated in this conference that focused on critical issues in serving children who have autism. One of the issues identified was establishing an interdisciplinary diagnostic and treatment team in our state. This was discussed recently by the *State Review Team*, as well as other options for delivering services. A primary concern is the currently available funding mechanisms. Medicaid, private insurance, Title XIX dollars and negotiated waivers are all possible sources of funding. In our state a carve-out waiver was created to serve medically fragile children; there are new carve-out waivers designed just to serve children with autism. There are limitations to the use of waivers, and typically child progress must be demonstrated as a prerequisite for continuing use of a waiver. There are differences across states regarding whether persons can be served who have

Parent Involvement:

Bob Rutten from the NDDPI provided an overview of the IDEA Part B State Performance Plan Indicator 8 related to Parent Involvement and IDEA '04. He described information in IDEA related to expected parent involvement in the evaluation, identification and educational placement of children who have disabilities. He also clarified the requirement for states to measure the percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities. The required collection and reporting of this information has affected how the NDDPI addresses parent involvement. Bob showed the joint committee members the current online NDPI special education survey for parents. He explained what action the department has done to direct administrators and special educators to encourage parents of children with disabilities to complete this online survey. Generally the responses from parents on this survey have been very positive. Deb Balsdon also gave a brief overview of the Part C requirements for measuring parent involvement. For Part C the focus of measurement for parent involvement relates to the extent to which services helped families achieve important family outcomes and the impact of early intervention services on families.

The joint ICC-IDEA Part B Advisory Committee adjourned at 12:05 p.m. CDT.